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## RECENT THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE

### BOOKS ON THE SCIENCE OF RELIGION

Five recent volumes on the science of religion show a common interest in the subject-matter. Otherwise they differ in purpose and point of view.

Mr. Jordan's<sup>1</sup> aim is scientific. He wishes to lay broad and deep the foundations of a new-born science. The volume before us is only one in a projected series of three. The second will treat of the principles and problems of comparative religion, the third will discuss its opportunity and outlook. Together they will formulate the prolegomena of the science of religion. The question will occur at once whether the work is not planned on too large a scale; and, without presuming to forecast what is yet in the future, the reviewer is obliged to confess that the volume already published would have been improved by judicious condensation. The diffuseness may be accounted for in part by the fact that the material was first prepared for oral delivery. In part it must be attributed to the author's enthusiasm for his science. Everything which bears upon it is important in his eyes—even details which cannot be called essential for his main purpose.

Mr. Jordan treats comparative religion as a science within a science. He makes the science of religion include three divisions: the history of religions, the comparison of religions, and the philosophy of religions. It must be clear to the reader that we need some English word equivalent to the German *Religionswissenschaft*. Religion is not a science, but an experience. In comparing religions we do not get comparative religion, but comparative science of religion, just as in comparing languages we get, not comparative language, but comparative philology or comparative grammar. Analogy would require "comparative theology" or "comparative mythology," or, if these be objectionable, "comparative pistology." It is a pity that we cannot settle on one of these as the name for our science.

Science is necessarily comparative. Our author justly points out that the work of the scientific student is to collect all the available facts that bear on his subject; then to group the facts according to their relations; thirdly, to discover the law which accounts for these relations. Comparison is the

<sup>1</sup> *Comparative Religion: Its Genesis and Growth*. By Louis Henry Jordan. With an Introduction by Principal Fairbairn. New York: Scribner, 1905. 668 pages. \$3.50.

method by which every investigator works. But this being so, there is no ground for separating the history of religions from the comparison of religions. The science may proceed historically in making its comparisons, or it may endeavor to ignore the element of time which is so important in history. It may plead that it takes its facts wherever it finds them and groups them according to their obvious resemblances. But it is a peril to ignore the historic order. In philology we may have the grammar of a single language as it is spoken at a particular epoch. Or we may, conceivably, have a comparative grammar which puts the related phenomena of two or more languages side by side. But this illustration shows the unscientific character of any method which is not historical. The grammar of the English language as it exists today is mere empiricism—it explains few of the facts which it registers. If it be the business of a science to make us understand things, English grammar of this kind is not a science. To become a science it must become historical. This is more emphatically true of a comparative grammar; it is really comparative only when it is really historical.

Here is the danger that the science of religion will turn away from the true path. The recurrence of similar phenomena in the most diverse religions is so striking that the collection and grouping of such facts becomes a fascinating pursuit. But such a study cannot be truly comparative unless it is rigorously historical. It follows, as has already been pointed out, that there is no ground for making comparative religion a science by itself. If it is anything it is the science of religion, and it is historical in its method.

Whereto we have attained in the construction of such a science is set forth at large in the volume under review. The method and scope of the science are discussed in two chapters; two more are devoted to the historical preparation; and then come seven which relate the historical development. As was to be expected, the survey of a large part of this development is crude and tentative in character. Men have been groping around for the science and have made many false starts. It was perhaps worth while to put all this in the record; the volume shows wide reading and great industry in bringing so many names together. Yet the chapter on auxiliary or subsidiary sciences might have been retrenched with advantage, and the illustrations of comparative sciences are too many. The value of the book will be found to consist in its full bibliography, which is made available by a copious index. A word of commendation may also be given to the colored charts which make us realize the numerical ratio of the different religions now existing on the earth.

The next volume—that of Dr. Aston<sup>2</sup>—is descriptive. The author aims to give us “a repertory of the more significant facts of Shinto for the use of the scientific students of religion.” The sources from which he draws are documents dated in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries of our era, together with the more systematic treatises of modern Japanese theologians. Guided by these documents we discover in Shinto a nature religion, its objects of worship being sun, earth, sea, wind, and mountains. The sun, it may be remarked, is feminine as in some other systems. Before the stage of belief in which these divinities came to their right there was an earlier polydemonism. This is indicated by the authorities themselves who say that aforetime the islands were peopled by savage deities, who in the daytime buzzed like summer flies and at night shone like firepots. These were banished when the present inhabitants came in, but some of them may survive in the numerous *genii locorum* who are worshiped along with the greater nature-gods. Dr. Aston does not think that Shinto arose directly out of ancestor-worship, though in the historic period a large number of deified men are found in the pantheon. In many cases it is difficult to tell whether a divinity who now figures as clan-ancestor was originally a real human hero, or whether an already existing god has been appropriated as ancestor by a clan whose members thus sought to enhance their own glory. Here, as in other countries, the double process has gone on. The worship of the mikado is the logical outcome. In the book before us the student will find an interesting account of the Japanese pantheon, mythology, and ritual. It is illustrated by wood-cuts from Japanese sources.

The next book<sup>3</sup> is frankly historical in its purpose. It is one of the series entitled “Weltgeschichte in Charakterbilder,” whose aim is evident from the title itself. Professor Hardy is a well-known authority on Buddhism, and his book a fine example of the popular sketch—eloquently written, thoroughly scholarly, yet without obtruding the apparatus of scholarship upon the reader. The author is in love with his subject and makes us see King Asoka as a lovable and admirable character. In these pages a long-forgotten hero comes to his rights as a wise and enlightened ruler, the nursing father of the Buddhist church to which he gave himself with the ardor of a genuinely religious soul. Incidentally Buddhism itself is portrayed for us in its best light. The pictorial illustrations do not always

<sup>2</sup> *Shinto, the Way of the Gods*. By W. G. Aston. New York and Bombay: Longmans, Green & Co., 1905. 390 pages. \$2.

<sup>3</sup> *König Asoka: Indiens Kultur in der Blütezeit des Buddhismus*. By Edmund Hardy. Mainz: Kirchheim, 1902. 72 pages. M. 4.

bear directly on the text, but are at any rate excellent examples of Indian art. The book may be unhesitatingly commended and should appear in an English dress.

Of Mr. Medhurst's book <sup>4</sup> we may say that its purpose is missionary and practical. The author is himself a mystic, as he confesses, and, having found in the old Chinese thinker a kindred spirit, he wishes to commend him to those who seek for light. *The Tao Teh King* sets forth a pantheistic view of the universe in aphoristic form and, as is usual in ancient philosophies, accompanies it with ethical maxims and reflections on life. Its aphorisms are indeed often obscure—so obscure that the uninitiated will be tempted to doubt whether the translators have always understood their text. But the analogies which it presents with what has been taught and said in other times are often striking. The editor brings this out by printing parallels from the most various sources. The Upanishads, the Bhavagad-gita, the Bible, Plato, the Gnostics, Meister Eckhardt, Thomas a Kempis, Hartmann, Thoreau, Emerson, Tennyson, Longfellow, and Browning appear in these pages along with Mr. Sinnett's alleged esoteric Buddhism and the world-mystery of Mr. G. R. S. Mead. The result is not unpleasing, but it can hardly be called a study in comparative religion. It is more properly a mystic anthology.

Last in our list comes the work of Messrs. Edmunds and Anesaki,<sup>5</sup> interesting because of the collaboration of American and Japanese scholarship. The idea of the authors is apparently to solve the definite problem of Buddhist influence on the New Testament. Such influence has repeatedly been asserted in recent years, and we now have all the material bearing on the question. The authors are to be commended for their reserve in refusing to affirm the dependence of any early Christian document on Buddhist sources. The only direct parallels they adduce are the ones already commented upon by Seydel and others. Their caution might have led them to closer criticism of some of their historical statements. The ancient Greek story that "Aristotle conversed with a Jew from Asia who came from the region of Damascus and belonged to a sect in that country that was derived from the Hindu philosophers," is only one of those bits of gossip which floated about in the Hellenistic world. It is taking it too seriously to base upon it the theory that Buddhist missionaries had reached

<sup>4</sup> *The Tao Teh King: A Short Study of Comparative Religion.* By C. Spurgeon Medhurst. Chicago: Theosophical Book Concern, 1905. 194 pages.

<sup>5</sup> *Buddhist and Christian Gospels now First Compared from the Originals.* By Albert J. Edmunds. Edited, with Parallels and Notes from the Chinese Buddhist Tripitaka, by M. Anesaki. Tokyo and Chicago: Yukokwan Publishing House, 1905. 226 pages.

Syria as early as the time of Alexander. The various utopias which classic authors located in India or Ethiopia prove nothing about specifically Buddhistic communities in those regions, and the so-called oriental speculation which influenced Greek and early Christian thinkers is Brahminic rather than Buddhistic. Pantheistic emanationism has always been at home in Asia; but it is a mistake to ascribe its spread to the preaching of Buddhism. The problem which needs solution is not how the New Testament writers were influenced by this type of thought, but how they kept so thoroughly free from it.

As to specific Buddhistic influence, the work before us proves no more than that some sort of connection exists between the stories of the nativity and of the temptation and similar accounts in Buddhist documents.

By the way, it was new to me that modern scholars are gradually accepting the view that *Pharisee* is only *Parsi* writ large.

NEW YORK CITY

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### THE BROSS PRIZE

A peculiar interest attaches to Dr. Orr's book<sup>1</sup> as being the first-fruits of the Bross prizes. Does it contain the guarantee of a usefulness commensurate with the dignity it possesses as the winner of so generous a prize in a competition thrown open to the scholars of all nations?

The temper of the book is admirable. Dr. Orr is no obscurantist. In dealing with the problem of the Old Testament he does not press the authority of Christ's testimony as if that closed the debate (p. 523). He does not argue on the basis of an inerrancy theory of inspiration (pp. 49, 363). He admits that the Old Testament books and the Old Testament religion must be studied as other books and other religions are studied (pp. 9, 14). He pays a fairly generous tribute to the great value of the critical work of the past century (p. 9), especially in its interpretation of prophecy (p. 453). He trusts to the self-corrective power of reverent science finally to solve "The Problem" (p. 15). In these respects Dr. Orr adopts a common standing-ground with the scholars from whom he differs. Therefore argument with him is possible. It may be thought that in the opening chapter he raises, in an unwarranted fashion, a dogmatic presumption against the critical position, when he emphasizes the fact that the chief exponents of criticism have been thoroughgoing anti-supernaturalists, and suggests that there is, "on the face of it, a supreme improbability that a theory evolved under the conditions . . . described

<sup>1</sup> *The Problem of the Old Testament : Considered with Reference to Recent Criticism*. By James Orr. New York: Scribner, 1906. 562 pages. \$1.75.